



PRESS RELEASE

Scientists highlight the importance of Open Science as response to tackle Covid-19

Islamabad, 11 May 2020 – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in partnership with Pakistan Academy of Sciences hosted a webinar on “*Covid-19 and Open Science*”, as a follow up to the *UNESCO Virtual Online Ministerial Dialogue on COVID-19* and ‘*Open Science*’ *International scientific collaboration*, held in March this year. More than 50 national and international participants including experts, members from academia and students attended the webinar. It explored the opportunities and challenges involved in informed evidence based decision-making and role of open science, particularly in case of COVID-19 for countries like Pakistan.

Patricia McPhillips, UNESCO Representative Pakistan, Prof. Qasim Jan, President Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Prof. Tariq Banuri, Chairman Higher Education Commission, Prof. Dr. Shahbaz Khan, Director UNESCO Jakarta, Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Prof. Aamer Ikram, Executive Director National Institute of Health and President Pakistan Biological Safety Association (PBSA), Prof. Zabta Shinwari, Vice Chair-COMEST and Prof. Saeed Khan, Focal Person, COVID-19, DOW UNIVERSITY of Health were the panelists who spoke on the importance of open data and knowledge access.

The panelists emphasized that an open science data platform is critical for evidence-based policy formulation. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the global necessity for open access to scientific data, which is vital. Panelists concurred that although there are multiple crises globally underway, with COVID-19 the most acute, climate, biodiversity, pollution, water and energy are also global concerns to be addressed. The need to bring youth for better mobilization of science was highlighted, with note that openly available information and knowledge is critical for researchers and students globally. The need to curb the global “infodemics”, with reliable scientific data was highlighted as a global challenge, with “infodemics” a growing challenge in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, it is all the more important that knowledge and experiences should be shared amongst all nations. There were many questions from a very active and interested group of online participants.

The webinar concluded with the adoption of Islamabad Statement for Action on Open Science. It is part of a dialogue that will steer towards a road map to establish an open science data platform in Pakistan. As a partner, Pakistan Academy of Sciences will share relevant information on COVID-19 on its website, <https://www.paspk.org/>.

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